

**BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
CITY OF WILLMAR, MN
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2014**

MINUTES

1. The Willmar Board of Zoning Appeals met on Monday, September 15, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. at the City Office Building.

**** Members Present:** Ross Magnuson, Larry Brown, Jeff Kimpling, Jay Lawton, Beverly Dougherty, Andrew Bjur, and Jim Rudnick.

**** Members Absent:** Jeff Kimpling.

**** Others Present:** Ryan Nelson, and Megan M. DeSchepper- Planner.

2. NELSON INTERNATIONAL SIGN VARIANCE- FILE NO. 14-04: The public hearing opened at 5:01 p.m. Ryan Nelson of Nelson International presented a request for a wall sign area variance on property legally described as follows: part of NE 1/4, Section 13, Township 119, Range 35 (2700 Hwy. 12 E). The Zoning Ordinance allows up to 8% of any wall area, computed by taking the width or length of the building times its height, or sixteen feet, whichever is less, may be devoted to signage. The sign as requested by the applicant is at 12 ½% of the wall area.

Mr. Nelson explained that they are remodeling and updating the façade of the building including signage. On the west wall there was a 455 sq. ft. hand painted sign since the 60's. The "International" truck logo can only be ordered in certain sizes, and due to the open area and distance from the highway this size seemed the best fit for visibility. Mr. Nelson added that he can see in a more dense commercial area the limitation on wall signs, but at this large 16 acre site with a building wall height of 25' the sign doesn't seem excessively large.

With no one from the public to speak for or against the request the hearing closed at 5:09 p.m.

The Board of Zoning Appeals reviewed and discussed staff comments (see Attachment A).

The Board talked about the site being cleaned up and size of signage greatly reduced. The applicant added that they will also be removing the freestanding sign on the site. The look of the property will be improved and there are no residential properties nearby.


Mr. Bjur made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dougherty, to approve the variance as requested.

The motion carried.

The reasoning the Board gave for approving the variance is that the variance is in harmony with the Zoning Ordinance as it is a permitted use in the zone. The variance is consistent with the comprehensive plan as the property is being used for a commercial purpose on a major State Highway. The size of the proposed sign is reasonable as it is greatly smaller than the previous sign. The situation is unique as the highway speeds at this location are greater than most commercial areas in town and the site itself is larger than the average commercial parcel thus necessitating a larger sign. The variance will not alter the essential character of the locality as the new sign is the same as the old sign (which has been there for decades) just smaller.

3. With no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 5:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Megan M DeSchepper".

Megan M. DeSchepper, AICP
Planner/Airport Manager

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS- SEPTEMBER 15, 2014

STAFF COMMENTS

1. NELSON INTERNATIONAL SIGN VARIANCE- FILE NO. 14-04:

- The applicant is Nelson International, Willmar, MN.
- The applicant request a wall sign area variance on property legally described as: part of NE1/4, Section 13, Township 119, Range 35 (2700 Hwy. 12 E).
- The property is zoned GB (General Business District).
- Zoning Ordinance allows up to 8% of any wall area, computed by taking the width or length of the building times its height, or sixteen feet, whichever is less, may be devoted to wall signs.
- The west wall of the property is $80' \times 16 = 1280 \times 8\% = 103.4$ sq. ft. is the maximum size wall sign the Ordinance would allow on the west wall face. The applicant is requesting a 159.55 sq. ft. wall sign.
- The City has only issued one sign size variance in the last 13 years, and it was for a Rice Hospital Sign.

RECOMMENDATION: Review variance standards in Section 9.D.3.a.1-4 to see if there are practicable difficulties, reasonableness, uniqueness, and essential character.